Resolution # 2022-247
Resolution of Support

CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY
RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT

The Central Florida Expressway Authority ("CFX"), an agency of the State of Florida, created by Part III of Chapter 348, Florida Statutes, hereby adopts this Resolution of Support on May 12, 2022 to increase the protection of conservation lands within the Central Florida region.

WHEREAS, the 1,689 acre area known as the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area ("Split Oak") was created via a Grant Award Agreement dated March 29, 1994 among Osceola County, Orange County, and the Florida Communities Trust ("FCT"); and

WHEREAS, the Grant Award Agreement provides that Split Oak is managed for "the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural and historical resources and passive, natural resource-based public outdoor recreation which is compatible with the conservation, protection and enhancement of Split Oak"; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife management plan for Split Oak includes goals of maintaining, designing, and developing miles of designated trails and undesignated trails within Split Oak and linking such trails with adjacent public areas, including trails for the Florida National Scenic Trail; and

WHEREAS, after careful and extensive consideration of routes for CFX's Osceola Parkway Extension ("Expressway"), the Split Oak Minimization Alternative was chosen as the preferred route, which includes 1.3 miles of the proposed Expressway crossing through Osceola County's southern corner of Split Oak; and

WHEREAS, the overall plan for the Expressway easement includes a donation of approximately 968 additional acres of conservation land in Orange County and 582 additional acres of conservation land in Osceola County, totaling approximately 1,550 acres of additional conservation land generally to the east of Split Oak; and

WHEREAS, this additional 1,550 acres of donated land provides more connectivity to existing preservation lands and helps provide a buffer for Split Oak and other contiguous conservation land; and

WHEREAS, on April 20, 2022, the FCT approved Orange and Osceola Counties request to modify the Split Oak Management Plan for a linear facility to allow for CFX's proposed Expressway; and

WHEREAS, CFX agrees to set up and fund an escrow account to finance the restoration and 30 years of maintenance for the 1,550 acres of donated land to help ensure the success of the restoration of the donated land; and

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WHEREAS, CFX supports granting a conservation and preservation easement across Split Oak and the 1,550 acres of donated land; and

WHEREAS, CFX supports granting an easement to the Florida National Scenic Trail within Split Oak and the 1,550 acres of donated land to support the mission of developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting a network of hiking trails throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, CFX supports restricting the ability to widen the easement for the Expressway after the initial construction of the Expressway; and

WHEREAS, CFX supports the creation of wildlife crossings and is committed to working with Florida Wildlife Corridors to provide for large wildlife crossings under the Expressway in Split Oak; and

WHEREAS, CFX recognizes the importance for the periodic prescribed burns for conservation and preservation and supports alerting the traveling public of such activities.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY AS FOLLOWS:

- CFX will not request a widening of the easement after the initial construction of the Expressway.
- CFX supports granting a conservation and preservation easement across Split Oak and the 1,550 acres of donated land to a qualified land conservancy organization.
- CFX agrees to fund restoration to meet the criteria identified in an independent management plan and will fund the maintenance for a 30-year period for the 1,550 acres of donated land. Restoration and maintenance costs is estimated to be approximately +/-$13 million net present value.
- CFX supports the efforts of Florida Fish and Wildlife and other land management agencies to assure that gopher tortoise mitigation easement areas within the 160 acres impacted by the Osceola Expressway Extension project are replaced with areas suitable for gopher tortoise habitat contiguous to and linked in a corridor to Split Oak.
- CFX supports the grant of an easement to the Florida Trail Association to promote, develop and maintain a network of hiking trails through Split Oak and the 1,550 acres of donated land with some allowances for dog friendly trails.
- CFX agrees to provide substantial bridged wildlife crossings along the 1.3 mile Expressway through Split Oak in Osceola County; using the Wekiva Parkway wildlife crossings as a model for this project.

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- CFX will advocate for the expansion of wildlife corridors to provide more wildlife connectivity to other preservation lands in the area based on the 2021 Florida Ecological Greenways Network.
- CFX will erect appropriate signage and warning signals along the expressway for the periodic prescribed burns necessary for the conservation and preservation of Split Oak and will coordinate with the appropriate agencies to alert the traveling public of prescribed burns in the area when necessary.

This Resolution was approved and adopted by the Central Florida Expressway Authority on May 12, 2022.

CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY

By: _____
Sean Parks, Chairman

ATTEST:

By: _____
Mimi Lamaute
Board Services Coordinator

Approved as to form and legality by legal counsel to the Central Florida Expressway Authority on this 12th day of May 2022 for its exclusive use and reliance.

By: _____
Diego "Woody" Rodriguez
General Counsel